



Monday 3rd June 2019

Dear Customer,

Well it's back to form, London 28C full sun, Richmond 17C with a very dark grey sky and intermittent rain. I was reserving judgement but it's now June and no sign of summer up here....in God's own county. He must like Yorkshire puddings. If I was God I'd be nestling in fields of lavender and sitting in fig trees in Provence. The soft fruit has started in the Mediterranean, we have apricots and nectarines in the fruit bags this week. We also have the first broad beans from Devon and new potatoes from Jersey.

Here are a few tasty recipes you could try:

Celery Soup

<i>head celery, trimmed and thinly sliced</i>	<i>2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced</i>
<i>1 onion, finely diced</i>	<i>150ml white wine</i>
<i>25g butter or margarine</i>	<i>1 tbs oil</i>
<i>1 litre vegetable stock</i>	<i>125ml cream, optional</i>

Heat the butter or margarine and oil in a large saucepan and cook the onion on a low heat for 10 minutes until soft and translucent. Add the celery and potato, cook for a minute then add the wine and cook on a low boil for 2 minutes. Add the stock and season. Bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 12-15 minutes until the celery and potato are tender. Whizz in a blender then return to the pan. Add the cream if using and gently reheat adding more stock to thin it if necessary. Check the seasoning before serving.

Roast Chickpea and Vegetable Pasta

<i>1 small onion, finely chopped</i>	<i>1 stick celery, diced</i>
<i>1 carrot, diced</i>	<i>1 clove garlic, crushed</i>
<i>400g tin chopped tomatoes</i>	<i>400g tin chickpeas, drained</i>
<i>2 tbsp tomato puree</i>	<i>1 tsp dried mixed herbs</i>
<i>1 tsp oregano</i>	<i>2 tbsp olive oil</i>
<i>spaghetti</i>	<i>grated cheese, optional</i>

Preheat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4. Scatter the chickpeas in a roasting tin and toss with 1 tbsp of the oil, some of the cheese, oregano and seasoning. Bake for 30 minutes until crispy and golden. Meanwhile add the remaining oil to a large saucepan and cook the onion, celery and carrot for 8-10 minutes or until beginning to soften and go golden brown. Season, add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Stir through the tomato puree, herbs and the chopped tomatoes. Add a little water then bring to the boil. Turn down the heat and simmer gently for 20-25 minutes until the sauce has thickened and slightly reduced. Add the roasted chickpeas for the last 10 minutes reserving a few to serve. Cook the pasta according to packet instructions while the sauce is simmering. Serve and scatter with the remaining chickpeas and cheese if using.

Broad Bean and New Potato Salad with French Vinaigrette

<i>handful broad beans</i>	<i>500g new potatoes</i>
<i>fresh parsley</i>	<i>1 lemon</i>
<i>olive oil</i>	<i>salt and pepper</i>
<i>boiled Hen Nation egg to serve</i>	

Pod the broad beans and cook in boiling water. Drain then dunk in cold water for 5 minutes. Cut the new potatoes into quarters and boil until tender. Rub the skins off the broad beans once they have cooled. Add them to the warm potatoes in a salad bowl along with a handful of finely chopped parsley. Make a vinaigrette by squeezing the juice of lemon into a bowl and add three times the amount of olive oil as well as some salt, pepper and two teaspoons of French mustard. Slice the hard-boiled egg over just before serving.

I know when I'm feeling low as I start eyeing up the piano. Time to call the piano tuner out again to prepare for the annual recitals of my mournful, repetitive melodies ...executed with a lack of technical ability....but a lot of conviction. Actually I've lacked technical ability in everything I've ever done. Another therapeutic activity is dredging my pond. Using a two-pronged garden implement that looks like a bent pitch fork I pull out all the green slime. I leave it on the edge of the pond so the water creatures can walk back in and I pick out any squiggling tadpoles which I've fished out. Twice in the last few days I have brought out a newt. They are an endangered species and my pond used to be full of them, but I hadn't seen any for at least 5 years. I thought I'd killed them all. I am so pleased they've returned. I came back in the house and then in my misery I saw a little baby rabbit hopping past the pond, up the steps and onto the back lawn. That is a first. I like to sit in my back garden at dusk with a cup of tea. It's slightly elevated and the bats swoop like fighter jets after the midges. The bat population seems to be increasing. So anyway.....nature is thriving here on Westfields and I am feeling much better. It's amazing what a cup of tea, a newt, a baby rabbit and a few bats can do.

A bit of mental stimulation might help too...but one has to make one's choices. When one opts to live in the middle of nowhere, what can one expect !

I live on the edge of a National Park. It's easy to get lulled into thinking that wildlife is surviving, more or less, despite its hideous persecution. There's wildlife squashed all over the roads. I crawl about the country lanes dodging hares and baby chicks. But drive just maybe 5 miles away from the National Park, over towards the Vale of York, the flat arable area, I'm still instinctively crawling, then realise there are no squashed animals on the roads, there are no animals. And that is the case now across much of England.

Another week ahead of delusional idiots entering the Tory leadership contest. It is just beyond pointless and timewasting.

I hope you have a good week...and enjoy your sunshine ☐

Kind wishes,

Isobel